

Cooperative Assessment Project

A partnership with industry, environmental groups, and government to restore natural resources injured by hazardous substance releases and oil spills.

NOAA developed the Cooperative Assessment Project (CAP) to promote cooperation among industry, environmental groups, and government to restore natural resources and their services. CAP focuses on sites affected by hazardous substance or oil contamination where there is potential natural resource damage assessment (NRDA) liability under CERCLA, OPA, RCRA, or other authorities (including federal and state-lead sites).

A cooperative assessment process provides incentives for industry with pollution liability to assume responsibility for restoring natural resources. Cooperative assessments offer industry the opportunity for a greater role and more control over the timing of restoration actions without undermining the natural resource trustee responsibilities of government agencies. Industry partners may also benefit from reduced damage assessment costs and reduced risk of litigation.

The goals of CAP are to expedite the restoration of injured natural resources and associated services, and encourage innovative approaches to the damage assessment process. CAP may also strengthen partnerships among industry, government and the environmental community, providing meaningful public involvement opportunities.

How CAP developed

CAP developed in response to industry requests for increased involvement and flexibility in natural resource damage assessment and restoration efforts. This approach evolved from the NRDA regulations requiring agencies to invite parties responsible for hazardous substance releases or oil spills to participate in the damage assessment.

NOAA explored the development of CAP by convening five meetings during 2001 with representatives from industry, environmental groups, and federal, state, and tribal agencies. Great interest and support led to the formation of a broad-based workgroup, with members reflecting their respective stakeholder communities. The workgroup is committed to developing practical ideas and options that lead to future cooperative assessments.

How you can help

NOAA encourages the public to suggest sites at which CAP could be applied. For more information about CAP, please visit—

www.darp.noaa.gov/cap.htm

NOAA continues to provide a forum for productive discussions to promote cooperative assessments through a CAP website and ongoing interaction with workgroup members. NOAA hopes to build on its experience and serve as a clearinghouse for lessons learned in past NRDA's, while also exploring novel ways to conduct new cooperative damage assessments.



Working cooperatively, trustees and Texaco replanted a salt marsh after a pipeline leaked 200,000 gallons of oil in Louisiana.



NOAA acts as a trustee on behalf of the public to restore coastal and marine resources injured by oil spills and hazardous substance releases. To learn more about CAP, please contact—

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